



10th District Legislative Report

Winter 2003

Rep. Barry Sehlin

Rep. Barbara Bailey

Letter/Survey

Dear friends and neighbors,

State lawmakers have a long and challenging agenda to work through during the 2003 legislative session – with significant issues that will affect you and your family. We believe a collaborative approach offers us the best hope for success, and we are encouraged by the willingness of lawmakers, thus far, to engage in genuine problem-solving.

We believe the success of the 2003 session will be measured by two important criteria:

- 1) Did we make progress in **bringing more jobs** to Washington's working families? and
- 2) Did we solve problems in a manner that will help **restore the people's trust** in government?

Repairing our struggling economy, finding fixes for our transportation system, making sure families have access to affordable health care, and maintaining quality in our schools will all be important steps toward our goals of putting people to work and rebuilding trust.

Of course, as we work through these issues, it's important that we hear your concerns and ideas. Please take the time to write your comments below. We look forward to hearing back from you.

It's an honor to be working on your behalf in Olympia.

Sincerely,



Barry Sehlin



Barbara Bailey

Would you like more information?

If you would like periodic updates on important issues being addressed by the Legislature, please provide the information below. You may also contact us directly via e-mail at bailey_ba@leg.wa.gov or sehlin_ba@leg.wa.gov.

Name _____

E-Mail _____ and/or

Address _____

Comments: _____

Budget remedy lies in greater spending discipline, improved economy

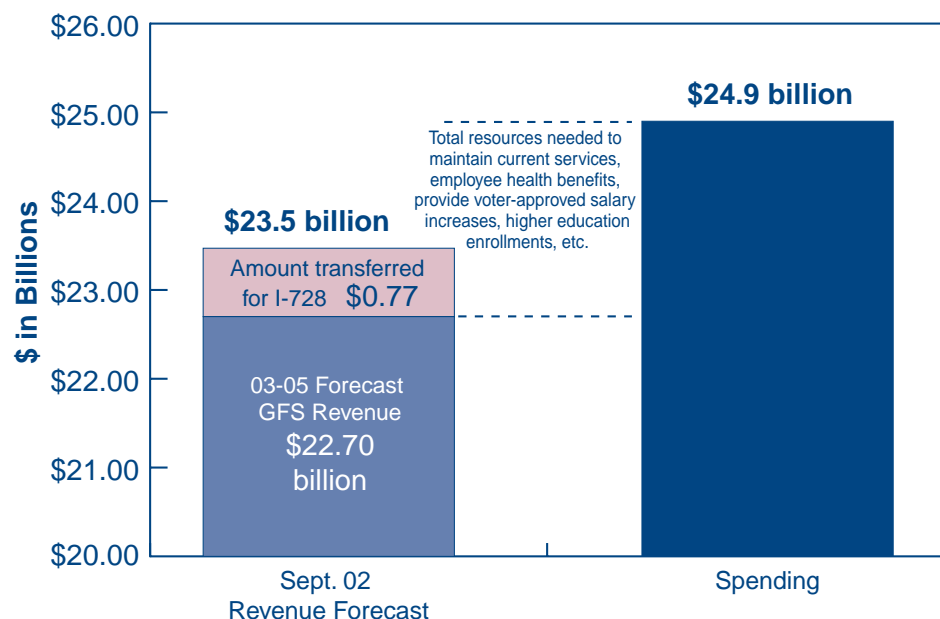
The state of our beleaguered operating budget – now facing a \$2 billion deficit – should come as a surprise to no one. It is the product of overspending and a declining economy – two factors that were largely ignored a year ago when a new spending plan was adopted.

The 2002 state operating budget authorized the expenditure of \$1.4 billion more than revenue coming in. It was irresponsible and unsustainable, and now we're paying the price.

We want to be honest about this: The Legislature cannot close this enormous budget deficit without affecting some people who depend on government services. Government has grown too far beyond its means to solve this problem without some pain.

However, we believe it is both possible and imperative that the Legislature balance this budget without raising general-fund taxes. State government is facing challenges, but so are families and businesses throughout our state. It's important that government share in the pain during these difficult times and start living within its means.

It's true that the state's costs for things such as health care and citizen-driven initiatives are rising faster than available revenue. But this would be the worst time to raise the tax burden on families and businesses. In the near term, we think government must tighten its belt and make some difficult decisions.



Let's make choice, access and affordability our priorities for health care

It's clear that we can do better providing health care for all citizens. To do that, however, we must work for a cost-effective solution instead of more government bureaucracy. Over the next two years we'll be working to strengthen your ability to make the important decisions about your health care. We must ensure patients maintain choice as we strive to make health care services more affordable and available to more people.

Health care costs are going up. Employers and employees are paying more out of pocket, and they have nowhere to turn. State government continues to dictate that health insurers include everything but the kitchen sink in their basic plans. But what consumers really need is more reliable, affordable coverage that provides care for their families when they're sick.

More affordable plans that provide good coverage, help prevent illness and give people more choice are available. But the government doesn't allow everyone to select these streamlined plans. We think consumers who have employer-provided health coverage and those who get coverage through the state should also have access to such innovative plans that give patients more choice and keep health care affordable.

Liability is driving health care providers away

Has it become harder to find a doctor or health care provider in your community? If it has, you're not alone, and one of the reasons is the skyrocketing cost of malpractice insurance in Washington. Frivolous lawsuits and large legal settlements have made insurance unaffordable for even the best physicians. The results are predictable. Washington has seen a 31 percent increase in the number of health care providers moving out of our state. Others have no choice but to close practices.

We support legislation that proposes medical malpractice insurance reforms. We can protect consumers and provide relief for doctors in our communities so they can continue caring for us and keep our health care affordable.



Creating jobs for Washington families



The longer-term solution to our budget shortfall is to get our economy moving again, get people back to work, and improve prosperity for our citizens. The wealth created by a healthy, diversified and competitive state economy generates revenues that improve our quality of life. It helps us educate our children, provide a stable and affordable health care

system, invest in roads, water and energy infrastructure, and ensure support for our most vulnerable citizens.

Unfortunately, our state has suffered the loss of 160,000 jobs over the last three years. A recent survey showed that the top concerns facing employers are taxes and government regulations. We believe there needs to be a stark philosophical shift in government so that it acts as a partner, not an adversary, with our state's employers. Government should encourage economic progress to help stimulate job growth. Economic growth that balances our respect for our natural environment and fairness to employees benefits us all.

We are working hard to adopt reforms that will stimulate the economy and create 160,000 new private sector jobs in the next three years.

Prescription drug coverage losing steam

We want to help the most needy seniors in our state afford their prescriptions. Unfortunately, despite the speeches and rhetoric, our initial efforts to offer a prescription drug benefit for seniors have given way to budget constraints.

Our fear is that seniors may be expecting solutions to this problem that everyone seems concerned about, but so far we have not been able to get our Democrat counterparts in the House to move forward with an honest proposal.

We encourage you to participate in this debate and pose critical questions about any prescription drug legislation being addressed. Lawmakers owe it to you to be honest about the real results of any proposed legislation: Is it making a positive difference? Are people paying less for their medications? Is it helping low-income seniors get the prescription drugs they need? Is it saving the taxpayers money? Unfortunately, the answer so far is no. We can and must do better.



Progress on our transportation problems will come with efficient, trustworthy state government






We understand that Washingtonians demand accountability from government and we agree there is work to do. We support a plan designed to help win back some of the public trust state government has lost. We'd like you to consider a transportation road-building plan called "Five-for-Five." It marks a new approach for improving transportation in Washington by changing the rules in governing, bringing real accountability and efficiency to the Department of Transportation, and most importantly, focusing on results to get our state moving again.

The plan is exactly the opposite of Referendum 51, the failed gas-tax measure which demanded money and no real assurance of efficiency.

In the House Republican package, meaningful reforms must be implemented first, before any increase in the gas tax. Specifically, a series of five reform measures are each linked to a one-cent-per-gallon gas tax increase. The reforms mean that any money raised would be spent more efficiently. Road-building projects would be done quicker and at lower cost.

If all the reforms are adopted, our state will have an additional \$2.5 billion to invest in transportation improvements over the next 10 years. More importantly, it will help us build trust with the citizens by showing them how government is improving the way it does business.

Five Transportation Reforms That Make "Cents"

- ◆ Real transportation permit streamlining – 
- ◆ Provide options for passenger-only ferry service – 
- ◆ True contracting-out reforms – 
- ◆ Performance audits plus – 
- ◆ Common-sense prevailing wage reforms – 



The House Republican plan, entirely opposite of Referendum 51, calls for meaningful reforms that **MUST** be in place before there is any increase in the gas tax. Our aim is to build public trust in government by changing the way it does business before asking for more of your money.



Please
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here



Rep. Barry Sehlin
Rep. Barbara Bailey
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

10th District _____ **Legislative Report**

Town Hall

Town Hall—You’re invited

Please join us at one of these 10th District Town Hall Meetings

Saturday, March 22

8:30 - 10 a.m. –

Bayview Senior Center,
Fireside Rm.,
14594 SR 525, Langley

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. –

Oak Harbor Senior Center,
51 Jerome St.

3:30 - 5 p.m. –

Stanwood Senior Center
Conference Rm.
7430 276th St. NW

Hope to see you there!

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